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Sent: Thursday, November 01, 2007 12:48 PM
To: Behavioral Advertising Comments
Subject: "Free Laptop" Scams

My name is Joseph Dowdy and I have years of experience with computers and technology as a help desk professional and software trainer. I can be reached at [redacted] and my address is [redacted] CA.

Thank you for the opportunity for me to comment on Privacy Issues and Online Behavioral Advertising.

On particular issue that I am interested in commenting on are websites that promise something for free in exchange for merely registering or taking a survey. I have personally attempted to see if these offers are genuine or if they are a ripoff. Something can only be a ripoff if it were either a waste of time or if it were a waste of money; however, considering that there is an internet value for a person's contact information (so that it can be resold for marketing purposes or is valuable to criminals for purposes of fraud), this is also a potential reason that these websites might be a ripoff or worse.

I have found that they are genuinely a ripoff as they are a waste of time and produce an extraordinary risk of causing an avalanche of spam which is a waste of time and resources.

Here is how to demonstrate that these are ripoffs. Search the internet for "free laptop" or "free iphone" and you will find websites that state in familiar terms that all you must do is register and you can select a free gift which includes the said laptop. You will find that after you register that you will receive several pop-ups or will be redirected to other websites which require further registration or they may require you to at some point PAY for something whether it is shipping for the laptop, shipping for free software which you are required to receive and evaluate using a survey or some other reason.

If you have enough patience and enough resources to pay for dozens of software programs or items for review, you will find the number of surveys and other hoops you must jump through continue to increase and eventually you can't help but give up because you could probably spend an entire day at one sitting doing all this to supposedly receive a free laptop while the path to receiving that free laptop gets blurrier and blurrier as new windows open and you are redirected into a labyrinth of surveys and registrations.

The net result is that you have given your confidential information as part of a legal transaction that never takes place. This should be considered outright fraud and perhaps that is why it isn't as prevalent, but still exists for suckers who have never heard of this type of scam.

Thank you for your time.

Joseph Dowdy